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For Immediate Release

Let the Games Begin! Nearly 600 Veteran Athletes Prepare to Descend on Spokane for National Veterans Wheelchair Games

Spokane, Wash., July 6, 2009—The anticipation has been building up for a year, and in a matter of days nearly 600 Veteran athletes from across the United States, Puerto Rico and Great Britain will come to Spokane to compete in the 29th National Veterans Wheelchair Games. The Games will take place July 13-18, 2009.

Presented by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA), the Games are open to all U.S. military Veterans who use wheelchairs for sports competition due to spinal cord injuries, certain neurological conditions, amputations or other mobility impairments. The Spokane VA Medical Center and PVA's Northwest Chapter are hosting the Games.

The 2009 Games will include competitions in 17 different events. These events include: track, swimming, field, basketball, weightlifting, softball, quad rugby, air guns, 9-ball, bowling, table tennis, archery, handcycling, trapshooting, a motorized rally, power soccer and wheelchair slalom, which is a timed obstacle course. Athletes compete in all events against others with similar athletic ability, competitive experience or age. A golf clinic will also be offered this year at Esmeralda Golf Course.

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2/2/2/2 Let the Games Begin!

Among the competitors this year, 18 local area Veterans are registered to attend from communities including Spokane, Loon Lake, Airway Heights, Cheney, Seattle, Priest Lake, Idaho, and Rathdrum, Idaho.

Different events will be held in and around Spokane during the week. Come to the Kick-off event, Monday, July 13, at 11:30 a.m., at the Convention Center Breezeway, for a fun preview of wheelchair basketball. The public is also invited to attend Opening Ceremonies, being held at 6 p.m. in Veterans Arena.

In addition to the competitions, and the Opening and Closing Ceremonies, the week will include a "Kids Day" at the Games on Friday, July 17, when local children with disabilities will interact with the athletes, participate in some sports events and watch the Veterans compete. The public is invited to attend any or all of the sports competitions throughout the week of the Games. For a full listing of the schedule of events for the week, visit the Games Web site. All of the competitive events are also open to the public, with free admission.

According to Spokane VA Medical Center Director Sharon Helman, spectators are strongly encouraged to attend. "The Games are a great opportunity for Spokane residents to cheer on our amazing athletes," Helman said. "Spokane's history of hosting so many large programs and being a champion city for both Veterans and sports, makes us the perfect location for this incredible event."

To learn more about our local athletes, visit our web site at www.wheelchairgames.va.gov, and look under the "News Media" tab. Media interested in covering these athletes may contact Matthew Allen (509) 434-7000 x6205; or by e-mail at matthew.allen2@va.gov.

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